

A SERMON FROM A SICK PREACHER NO. 3014

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”
1 Peter 2:7

Not only was this the first text from which Mr. Spurgeon preached, but it was his theme on many subsequent occasions. Two of these discourses bear the same title—Christ Precious to Believers, although one of them is #242 in the New Park Street Pulpit and the other is #2137 in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MY brethren, I am quite out of order for addressing you tonight. I feel extremely unwell, excessively heavy and exceedingly depressed, and yet I could not deny myself the pleasure of trying to say a few words to you. I have taken a text upon which I think I could preach in my sleep, and I believe that, if I were dying, and were graciously led into the old track, I could, with my last expiring breath, pour out a heart full of utterance upon the delightful verse which I have selected.

It happens to be the passage from which I first essayed to speak in public when I was but a boy of sixteen years of age, and I am sure it contains the marrow of what I have always taught in the pulpit from that day until now. The words are in the second chapter of the first epistle of Peter, and the seventh verse, *“Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.”*

We might find “ample room and verge enough” if we were to enlarge upon the preciousness of Christ in His person as God and perfect man, His preciousness to His Father, His preciousness to the Holy Spirit, His preciousness to angels and glorified men. We might next speak of Him in the preciousness of His work, showing His preciousness as the Mediator of the new covenant, and as the incarnate Messenger of that covenant on earth, His preciousness as working out a perfect righteousness, and as rendering a complete expiation.

We might dwell upon His preciousness in all His offices, whether as Prophet, Priest, or King, and in all His relationships as Friend, Brother, as Bridegroom. Indeed, we have before us a subject as inexhaustible as the river of God, and as bright as the sapphire throne. If we should endeavor to show how precious the Well-beloved is in all respects, we should need eternity in which to complete the task.

*“Precious is the name of Jesus,
Who can half its worth unfold?
Far beyond angelic praises,
Sweetly sung to harps of gold.*

*“Precious when to Calvary groaning,
He sustain'd the cursed tree;
Precious when His death atoning
Made an end of sin for me.*

*“Precious when the bloody scourges
Caused the saved drops to roll;
Precious when of wrath the surges*

Overwhelm'd His holy soul.

*"Precious in His death victorious,
He the host of hell o'erthrows;
In His resurrection glorious,
Victor crown'd o'er all His foes.*

*Precious, Lord! beyond expressing,
Are thy beauties all divine;
Glory, honor, power, and blessing
Be henceforth for ever thine."*

The wording of the text binds our thoughts to one point. "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious,*" it is not so much how precious He is, as how precious He is to *you*. If you are a believer, the text affirms that Jesus Christ is, without any adverb to limit the extent of the descriptive word, precious to *you*.

I. We shall, first, talk awhile upon the truth that JESUS CHRIST IS NOW PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS.

Notice, attentively, *how personally precious Jesus is*. There are two persons in the text, "*Unto you therefore which believe HE is precious.*" "You" and "He." You are a real person, and you feel that you are such. To yourself, you must ever be the most real of existences. You do not think of yourself as a person of whom you have read in history, or heard of in discourse, or seen from a window years ago. You have (to use an ugly word, since I do not know any substitute for it), realized yourself, you are quite clear about your own existence.

Now, in the same way, I pray you strive to realize the other Person. "*Unto you therefore which believe HE is precious.*" Jesus exists just as really as you do, and you must not regard Him as a personage who was here one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine years ago, or one of whom you have heard, and whom you like to think of as a poetical conception, but there is a real Christ now existing, in spirit existing here, in real flesh and blood now standing at the right hand of the Father, and between Him and you, if you are a believer, there exists a bond of unity which, though invisible, is nevertheless most matter-of-fact and positive. You believe in Him, He loves you, you love Him in return, and He sheds abroad in your heart a sense of His love. You twain are bound together fastly and firmly, there is neither myth, nor dream, either in Him or in your union to Him. He is and you are, and He is in very deed most precious to you.

Notice, too, that while the text gleams with this vividness of personality, to which the most of professors are blind, it is weighted with *a most solid positiveness*, "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.*" It does not speak as though He might be or might not be, but "*he is precious.*"

There are some things about myself as a Christian which are frequently matters of question. I may gravely question whether I am growing in grace, and under such a doubt I may search my heart to see whether I love my Lord better, or whether I have more fully conquered my sins, but one thing I do not question, namely, that being a believer in Him, Jesus Christ is unutterably precious to my soul. If thou doubtest thy faith, thou mayest doubt whether Christ is precious to thee, but if thy faith be certain, the preciousness of Christ to thy heart is quite as certain. "*He is precious.*"

If the new life be in thee, thou art as sure to love the Savior as fish love the stream, or the birds the air, or as brave men love liberty, or as all men love their lives. Tolerate no peradventures here, allow no debate upon this vital point of thy religion. Jesus must be precious to thee. Cleanse thine eye if any dust hath dimmed thy sight of Jesus' preciousness, and be not satisfied till, in the language of the spouse, thou canst say, "*My Beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand,*" "*yea, he is altogether lovely.*"

Mark, further, *the absoluteness of the text*, "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.*" It is not written how precious He is. The text does not attempt, by any form of computation, to measure the

price which the regenerate soul sets upon her bosom's Lord. There is no hint that He is moderately precious, it does not even say positively or comparatively precious. I infer therefore that I may, if I choose, insert the word "superlatively," and certainly, if I did so, there would be no exaggeration, for more dear than light to the eyes, or life to the body, is Jesus to the sanctified heart. Each saint can truthfully sing—

*"Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust:
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust."*

Since no sparkling gems or precious metals, no royal regalia, or caskets of rare jewels can ever equal the value of Jesus, the comparison is vain. We therefore place Him by Himself alone and say that He is absolutely precious to believers. Gold is precious, but the diamond is more so, and in comparison with the diamond, the gold is of small account. The diamond is precious, but give a man a bagful of diamonds of the first water, and put him down in a desert, or let him be out on the wild waste of ocean, he would give all his diamonds for a draught of pure water to drink, or a crust of bread to eat, so that, in certain cases, even the excellent crystal would lose its value.

In fact, mineral substances are merely arbitrary signs of value, they have but little worth in themselves, gold in itself is less useful than iron, and a diamond of little more account than a piece of glass. They have no absolute intrinsic value which would remain the same under all contingencies. But Christ is absolutely precious, that is to say, nothing can ever match Him, much less excel Him, and He is precious under all circumstances. There never can arrive a time when we shall be compelled to confess His want of value or lower our estimate of Him.

He is infinitely precious. O my soul, dost thou esteem Him so? My heart, art thou sure of this, that unto thee He is precious beyond compare, precious positively, precious comparatively, though heaven itself were compared, precious superlatively, beyond all things that can be dreamed of, or imagined. Is He to thee essential preciousness, the very standard of all value? Thus it should be, for the text means no less, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious."

The thought which I desire to bring out into fullest relief is this, that *Jesus Christ is, today, continually precious to His people*. The moment a soul believes in Jesus, His sins are forgiven. Well, then, the precious blood that washes all sin away, is not that done with? Oh, no! Unto you that believe, though you have believed to the saving of your soul, He is still precious, for your guilt will return upon your conscience, and you will yet sin, being still in the body, but there is a fountain still filled with blood, and thus unto you, experientially, the cleansing atonement is as precious as when you first relied upon its expiating power.

Nay, Jesus is more precious to you now than when first you were washed in His blood, and were made white as snow, for you know your own needs more fully, have proved more often the adaptation of His saving grace, and have received a thousand more gifts at His blessed hands. I do fear me that some Christians imagine that, after believing, all is done, but my Lord Jesus Christ is no old Almanac, used up, and of no further service. He is not like the physic which I took months ago, which then healed me of my disease, so that now I can afford to put the rest of it on the shelf, and laugh at it, oh, no! He is still my divine medicine.

Still I need Him, and still I have Him. If I believe in Him, I feel I want Him more than ever I did, and He is dearer to me than ever He was. If I needed Him aforetime as a poor guilty sinner, I want Him, just as much as a poor needy saint, hanging upon His daily bounty, deriving life perpetually from His life, peace from the virtue of His precious blood, and joy from the outflowings of His love to me. Instead of Christ's losing value to the believer, the pith of the text is this—that you, believer, when you get Christ, and get what Christ bringeth to you, instead of esteeming Him as though He were an empty vessel, out of which you had drained the last drop, prize Him most highly than ever you did before. He is not a gold

mine worked out and exhausted, a field reaped of its harvest, or a vineyard where the grape gleaning is done, He has still the dew of His youth, the fullness of His strength, the infinity of His wealth, the perfection of His power.

II. Now, beloved, just for a minute or two, let us think HOW CHRIST IS TODAY PRECIOUS TO YOU.

He is today precious to you *because His blood, even now this day, is the only thing which keeps you from being a condemned sinner, exposed to the wrath of God.* There has been enough sin upon your soul, my brother, my sister, this very day, to cast you into hell, if your Surety had not stood between you and God's justice. You have been into no sinful company today, you have been in your Sunday school class, and I have been in the pulpit, but ah! my pulpit sins would have damned me today, if it had not been for that precious blood, and thy Sunday school sins would have shut thee up in hell, if that dear Mediator had not stood between thee and God.

So, you see, it is not merely the first day in which you believe in which He is precious to you, but right on still, as long as you are a sinner, the Intercessor stands and pleads for you, evermore putting your sin away, being yesterday, today, and forever, your Savior, your shield, and your defense, and therefore evermore supremely precious.

Remember, too, He is precious, *because the only righteousness you have is still His perfect righteousness.* That which pleads with God for you is not what *you* are, but what *HE* is. You are accepted at this moment, but you are only "accepted in the Beloved," You are not justified because you feel in a sweet frame of mind, or because your heart rejoices in the name of God.

Oh, no! your acceptance is all in your great Surety, and if it could be possible that He and the entire system of His grace could be withdrawn, and covenant engagements abrogated, you would be as unacceptable as even lost spirits are, and would be like them, for ever driven from the face and favor of God. Is He not, then, as your accepted Substitute, at this hour most precious to you?

Moreover, beloved, Jesus Christ is precious to you at this moment, as much as ever He was, *because from henceforth it is His example which you strive to initiate.* So far as He is an example to His people, His character has always been most admirable in your esteem, and this day you delight to know that, in His life, God's law appears—

"Drawn out in living characters."

You aspire to be like Him now, you expect to be perfectly like Him in the day of His appearing. Now, because He shows you what you shall be, and because in Him lies the power to make you what you shall be, is He not therefore daily precious to you? In proportion as you fight with sin, in proportion as you seek for holiness with inward longings and sublime pantings, in that proportion will Jesus Christ, the Paragon of all perfection, be precious in your esteem.

Beloved, you are to be crucified with Him, your flesh, with its corruptions and lusts, must die upon His cross as He died. Is He not precious when you believe that it will be by virtue of His death that sin will die in you? You are to rise in Him, nay, I trust you have already risen in Him, into newness of life, I hope you are panting more and more after the resurrection life, that you may no longer regard the dead things of this world, but live for eternal things, as those whose "life is hid with Christ in God." If so, I know you will prize a risen Savior, and your appreciation of Him will increase as you drink more deeply into the fellowship of the risen life.

Forget not, beloved, that our Redeemer has ascended, and in that ascension every saint has his share. I do not say that you all enjoy your share yet, but in proportion as you do so, you will reckon Christ to be precious, for He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places," "our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," whose Second Advent is to be the perfection of our spiritual life, the unveiling of the hidden beauties and

manifestations of the sons of God. Just in proportion as you enter into your royal heritage, and live in it, and believe in it, in this proportion Jesus Christ will be precious to you.

Beloved, let me tell you a secret. To many of you, there is as much in Christ undiscovered as you have already enjoyed. Your faith has only yet grasped Christ as saving you from going down to the pit—Christ is precious to you so far, but if your faith could even now comprehend the fact that you are one with Christ, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, that you are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, ah, then, how doubly precious would Jesus be! As surely as your faith grasps more, and becomes more capacious, and appropriating, Christ will grow in preciousness to you.

I am persuaded that there is a meaning in these words which none of God's saints have yet been able to discover, a deep mysterious preciousness of Jesus, only to be known by a close and intimate acquaintance with Him such as falls to the lot of few. "Unto you therefore which believe,"—just in proportion as you believe, the larger, the stronger, the deeper, the purer, the sublimer, the more full-grown your faith, the more unto you Jesus Christ is precious. Ask, then, for more faith, that Jesus may be more precious to you, and God grant it to you, for His name's sake!

III. Thus much on that point, now a few words on another. BECAUSE JESUS IS PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS, HE EFFICACIOUSLY OPERATES UPON THEM. The preciousness of Christ is, as it were, the leverage of Christ in lifting up His saints to holiness and righteousness.

Let me show you this. *The man who trusts Christ values Christ*, that which I value I hold fast, hence, our valuing Christ helps us to abide steadfast in times of temptation. The world saith to a Christian, "Follow me, and I will enrich thee." "Nay," saith the Christian, "Thou canst not enrich me, I have Christ, and I am rich enough." "Follow me," saith the world, "and I will bless thee, I will give thee the delights of the flesh." "Nay," saith the heart, "thou canst not bless me, for these things are accursed, and would bring me sorrow, and not pleasure, Jesus Christ is my pleasure, and to love Him and to do His will is my joy."

Do you not see that the greater your value of Christ, the greater your strength against temptation? Although the devil may tempt you with this and that, yet Jesus Christ, being more precious than all else, you say, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou canst not tempt me while Christ is dear to my spirit." Oh, may you set a very high value upon Christ, that thus you may be kept firm in the day of temptation!

Notice further, *this valuing of Christ helps the believer to make sacrifices*. Sacrifice making constitutes a large part of any high character. He who never makes a sacrifice, in his religion, may shrewdly suspect that it is not worth more than his own practical valuation of it. When a man hath a very important document about him, on which depends his title to his estates, if a thief should try to take it from him, he will suffer the thief to tear away his garments, to rob him of anything he has except his treasure, that he takes care to hold fast as long as he can.

Indian messengers, men entrusted with jewels, have been known to swallow them to preserve them from robbers, and to allow themselves to be stripped naked of every rag they wore, but they would not lose the jewel with which their prince had entrusted them. So the Christian will say to the world, "Take away my fortune, take away my livelihood, take away my good name, if thou wilt, O lying world, but despite all, I will retain my Savior, for He is precious!" Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for Christ, and he never will or can give Christ up if Christ be precious to him.

See, then, that believing in Jesus makes Him precious, and His being precious helps us to make sacrifices most cheerfully for His dear sake.

Moreover, brethren, *this valuing of Christ makes us jealous against sin*. What, I say, does Jesus Christ deign to live under my roof? Then, while He lives in my heart, I will give no roosting place to any foul bird of sin that might begin hooting in His ear. No, ye enemies of Christ, begone, begone, begone! My Beloved shall have the best chamber of my spirit, undefiled by your filthy feet. We are afraid lest we should do anything to grieve the heavenly Lover of our souls, this makes us keep our garments white, and pick our steps through this miry world. Hence, a right valuing of Christ promotes directly the

highest degree of sanctification. He who loves the Redeemer best purifies himself most, even as His Lord is pure.

Besides, beloved, *high valuing of Christ helps the Christian in the selection of his associates in life.* If I hold my Divine Lord to be precious, how can I have fellowship with those who do not esteem Him? You will not find a man of refined habits, and cultured spirit, happy amongst the lowest and most illiterate. "Birds of a feather flock together." Workers and traders unite in companies according to their occupations. Lovers of Christ rejoice in lovers of Christ, and they delight to meet together, for they can talk to each other of things in which they are agreed. I would recommend you to choose the church of which you would be a member, and the pastor whom you would hear, by this one thing, by how much of Christ there is in that church, and how much of the savor of Christ there is in that ministry.

It is an evil thing for a child of God to be enchanted by mere rhetoric. As well might you choose a table to feast at merely on account of the knives and forks, or the polish of its mahogany. You require food for the soul, and there is nothing that will long feed a true heart but Jesus Christ, who is the meat and the drink of His people. Love to Christ soon makes a Christian discontented with mere oratory. He cannot be satisfied even with the best doctrine apart from Jesus. "They have taken away my Lord," saith he, "and I know not where they have laid him." I must hear about Jesus, and if that silver bell does not ring, then all the rest may chime as they may, but my ear is at unrest until I hear that celestial sound.

Thus, a lofty estimate of Christ will be seen, if I had time to track it, to operate through the entire history of a Christian.

Little need is there more fully to particularize, but we must not fail to remark that *a sense of the Redeemer's preciousness makes the Christian useful*, for that which is much on the heart will soon creep up to the tongue, and the testimony of the heart is a notable method of spreading the Gospel. If thou lovest Christ much, thou wilt speak about Him.

Thy restrained speech will almost choke thee, thy soul will be hot within thee whilst thou art silent, till, at last, like a fire in thy bones which cannot longer be concealed, it will break out, and thou wilt say to others, "My Beloved is the fairest and noblest of all beloveds, oh, that you all knew Him and loved Him as I do! If you see Him, His face is brighter than the sun in its strength, if you hear Him, His voice is sweeter than the chorus of heaven, if you draw near to Him, His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, and if you trust Him, you will find Him to be faithfulness and truth itself."

Broken the words may be, the sentences may not flow with rhythmical harmony, but He who really loves Christ must out with it, somehow or other. Thus, telling out, with a burning heart, the things which He has made touching the King, others will hear the good news, and they will ask, "Who is this Precious One?" and they will, by God's good Spirit, be led to seek Him and find Him too. So, the Christian valuing Christ will come to be useful to the souls of men, indeed, as I have said before, it will exercise an operating power on the entire Christian manhood and render it holiness unto the Lord.

IV. Christ being thus precious, HIS PRECIOUSNESS BECOMES THE TEST OF OUR CHRISTIANITY.

I shall not prolong this humble talk, but shall, in conclusion, put a question to you, Beloved brother or sister, you know very well that I would be the last person in the world to speak lightly of the value of sound doctrine. I wish we were all far more acquainted with the Scriptures than we are, and that the doctrines of grace were more clear to our understandings, and more imprinted upon our hearts, but there are some people, who love a certain set of doctrines so much, that, if you diverge a hair's breadth, they will denounce you as rotten at the core. They will not associate with any who do not say, "Shibboleth," and sound the "sh" very harshly too. They will cut off and condemn all God's people who do not precisely agree with them.

Now, mark you, it is not written, "Unto you that believe a code of doctrines will be precious," That is true, but it is not written so in the text. The text is, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." It is better to count Christ precious than it is to count orthodoxy precious. It is not loving a creed, but it is loving Jesus, that proves you a Christian. You may become such a bigot that it may be only the laws

of the land which keep you from burning those who differ from you, and yet you may have none of the grace of God in your heart.

I love Protestantism, but if there is anything in this world that I have a horror of, it is that political Protestantism which does nothing but sneer and snarl at its fellow citizens, but which is as ignorant as a cow about what Protestantism truly is. The great truths of Protestantism—not merely Protestant ascendancy—and the great secret power of those truths, far more than the mere letter of them, is the thing to be prized. You may get it into your head that you are a member of the one only true church, you may wrap yourself about with any quantity of self-conceit, but that does not at all prove you to be a possessor of grace.

It is love to Christ that is the root of the matter. I am very sorry, my dear brother, if you should hold unsound views on some points, but I love you with all my heart if Jesus is precious to you. I cannot give up believers' baptism, it is no invention of mine, and therefore, I cannot give up my Master's ordinance. I am sure that it is Scriptural. I cannot give up the doctrine of election, it seems to me so plainly taught in the Word, but over the head of all doctrines and ordinances, and over everything, my brother, I embrace thee in my heart if thou believest in Jesus, and if He be precious to thee, for that is the vital point.

These are the matters of heart-work that mark a Christian, nothing else is so true a test. If you cannot say, "Jesus is precious to me," I do not care to what church you belong, or what creed you are ready to die for, you do not know the truth of God unless the person of Christ is dear to you.

This may serve as a test for each one here. My brother, my sister, dost thou believe in Him who is the Son of God, and yet was born of the Virgin here on earth? Dost thou rely alone on Him who, on the cross, poured out His heart's blood to redeem sinners? Dost thou depend on Him who now standeth with His priestly garments on before the throne of the infinite majesty, pleading for the unjust, that they may live through him?

If thou dost, then answer this question, Dost thou love Jesus now? Dost thou love Him with thy heart and soul? Wouldst thou serve Him? Dost thou serve Him? Wilt thou serve Him? Wilt thou subscribe thy hand to be His servant from this day forth? Didst thou declare now, if not with lip, yet honestly with thy soul, "He is precious to me, and I would give up all else sooner than give up Him?" Then it is well with thee! Be thou happy and rejoice. Come thou to His table, and feast with Him at the banquet of love.

If not, thou hast not built on the rock. If thou art not loving Christ, I pray thee examine thyself, and see where thou art, for there is but a stop between thee and hell. Repent! May God convert thee, and give thee now to put thy confidence in Jesus, and now to be saved, that He may be glorified in thee, for hitherto He has had no glory from thee.

Unto you that do not believe, Christ is not precious, and you will go your way, and despise Him. Oh, that you were made wise by the Holy Ghost, and taught to consider things aright! Then Christ would be precious indeed to you. He is the only way for your escape from the wrath to come. He is the only hope for you of ever entering the gates of heaven. He must be your only shelter when the world will be all on a blaze, as soon it shall, when the stars shall fall, like withered leaves from the trees, when all creation shall rock and reel, and His voice shall resound in earth, and heaven, and hell, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment!"

The only hope of a Savior, in that last tremendous day, must be found in Jesus. Oh, seek Him now while He may be found, call upon Him now while He is near! Turn not your heel away from Him now, lest you turn once for all to perdition. Come to Him now, believe in Him now, and He shall have the glory. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 PETER 2

Verse 1. *Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,—*

Putting these evil things right away from you, having nothing further to do with any of them. Notice the repetition of the word “all.” “All malice, and all guile,”—everything in the shape of deceit—“and all evil speakings.” All these are to be put away by all believers, as rags are put away in the rag-basket or refuse on the dunghill.

2. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:*

Be glad to get simple truth, the “milk of the Word.” Even if you can digest the strong meat of the Word, never grow weary of the milk, for it is always good diet even for a full-grown man in Christ. Do not crave milk and water, but “desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.” It is not enough for you to be spiritually alive, you must grow, and especially while you are babes in grace, your great desire should be that you may grow.

3. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

You begin with tasting that the Lord is gracious, you go on to desire the unadulterated milk of the Word, and so you grow in grace more and more.

4. *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,—*

No one figure is sufficient to set forth Christ as He really is. A stone is a Scriptural simile and symbol of Christ, but we have to make the metaphor somewhat incongruous by comparing Him to “a living stone.”

5. *Ye also, as lively stones,—*

It is not “lively” stones, it is the same word, in the original, in both cases—“a living stone” and “living stones.” The translators of our Authorized Version have often rendered the same Hebrew or Greek word in a different way, which is a pity, as it is in this instance, “Ye also, as *living* stones,”—

5. *Are built up a spiritual house,—*

A house that is a living structure from the foundation to the topstone.

5. *An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

He is a living stone, and you, as living stones, are built upon Him, and He and you together make up a living spiritual house, and in order that the house may have suitable tenants, and be properly furnished, you also become priests, and as priests, you “offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

6. *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

Thus the apostle quotes from the prophet Isaiah the ancient prophecy concerning Christ.

7. *Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,—*

Here Peter quotes from Psalm 118:22. What reverence these inspired men had for the inspired Book! The Spirit of God could have spoken fresh words if He had pleased, but as if He meant to honor above everything else the Book which He had Himself inspired, He “moved” Peter to quote the ancient prophet and psalmist in confirmation of what he was writing.

8. *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*

These are terrible words, but they are true. I cannot fully explain them. As Archbishop Leighton says, “It is easier to get into a depth over this awful truth than it is to get out again.” O God, grant that none of us may stumble at Christ! If we do, Christ will not move because we kick at Him, or fall over Him.

9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;*

These are wonderful epithets that are here heaped upon believers. May we have the grace to be able to appropriate them, and to expound them in our lives!

9. That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

See where you once were and see also to what you have been called by God's grace, "out of darkness into light." That is not all, into His light. Even that is not all, "into his marvelous light." The light of the Gospel is full of wonders. As common light is made up of many colors, so the light of God's grace is made up of many marvelous colors—the colors of all the attributes of God.

10. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

What a great change conversion is! And how great a change conversion works! How wonderful is the effect of regeneration! We had not obtained mercy, but now we have obtained mercy; we were not a people, but now we are the people of God.

11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you—

Peter puts his hands together, and pleads with intense earnestness.

11. As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Those fleshly lusts belong to this present evil world, but you do not belong to it, you are "strangers and pilgrims" here, therefore feel an absolute alienation towards such things, an utter abhorrence of them. Do not even think of them, much less practice them. "Abstain from fleshly lusts," for, while they injure the body, that is not the worst thing that they do, for they "war against the soul."

12-13. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:

You are not to be disturbers of the peace, you Christian people are to cultivate the spirit of conciliation wherever you dwell, submitting yourselves, "for the Lord's sake," even to come things which you do not like.

13. Whether it be to the king, as supreme;

In Peter's day, the king was a poor creature, and something worse than that. Indeed, I might say of the bulk of the Emperors of Rome, who were the chief "kings" of that day, that they were monsters of iniquity, yet the office was to be respected even when the man who occupied it could not be, much more should it be respected when the occupant is what a true "king" should be.

14-16. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free,—

Free in yourselves, free in your conscience, free in your mind and heart.

16. And not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

You possess a freedom which others claim, but do not know. You feel that you are no man's slave, yet you do not use your liberty for evil, or to the injury of others.

17-19. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

There is no credit in suffering rightfully, the credit is in patiently enduring suffering, which you do not deserve.

20-21. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called:

It is part of a true Christian's calling to bear what is put upon him wrongfully.

21-23. Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

This leads Peter to make the following glorious declaration concerning the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,—*

There was a transference of sin from sinners to Christ. This is no fiction. He, “his own self,” bore that sin “in his own body on the tree,”—

24. *That we, being dead to sins,—*

Because He died for us, and we died in Him—

24. *Should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

By His sufferings, you were cured of sin. His death not only removed from you the penalty of sin; but what is far better, it also removed from you the dread disease itself.

25. *For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.*

God grant that this may be true concerning every one of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.